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# What it takes to make a 'thing'

## (Fichte, *Grundriss des Eigenthümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre*)

M. Jorge de Carvalho

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### 1. Introductory remarks

Contrary to what may seem to be the case, it is not wholly idle to ask the question 'what does it take to make a thing?' To be sure, we have long been familiar with things, and indeed with all kinds of things. We are constantly surrounded by them – having them before us, dealing with them: “limas, umbrales, atlas, copas, clavos,/nos sirven como tácitos esclavos,/ ciegas y extrañamente sigilosas!” (“files, doorsills, atlases, wine-glasses, nails,/which serve us, like unspeaking slaves, /so blind and so strangely reserved!”).<sup>1</sup> But at the end of the day, none of this prevents things from being, to borrow Augustine’s words, “et usitata et abdita” (both usual and hidden), “manifestissima et usitatissima, et eadem rursus nimis latent, et nova est inventio eorum” (“most manifest and ordinary, and yet too deeply hidden, so that their discovery is still to come”).<sup>2</sup>

This paper focuses on Fichte’s answer to the said question – more precisely on his transcendental account of *what it takes to make a thing*, as laid out in his *Grundriss des Eigenthümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre* (1795).

First of all, it should be borne in mind that according to Fichte there is no simple answer to the said question. In his view, *several* requirements must be met if there is to be a thing as such. In other words, a thing has a variety of structural ingredients, each of which a) is nothing less than a *sine qua non*, but on the other hand b) proves unable to play the role of a *sufficient* condition. The result being that a full and satisfactory answer to the question “What does it take to make a thing?” must be able both to identify all the essential ingredients without which there simply can be no ‘thing’ as

such and to clarify how these various ingredients relate to each other and work together in such a way that they bring about 'things' as such.

This is what this paper is all about. It tries to work out which ingredients are necessary to make a 'thing' (viz. an 'object') and what their connection is with each other. The point is that a) Fichte's account of the said 'ingredients' in his *Grundriss* (notably *Empfindung*, *Anschauung*, *Vermögen zu setzen oder nicht zu setzen*, *reines Nicht-Ich*, *Bild*, *Mittelanschauung*, and *Ding*) differs from all others, b) his understanding of each and every one of these ingredients is surprisingly ground-breaking (and proposes nothing less than a completely new approach to *Empfindung*, *Anschauung*, *Vermögen zu setzen oder nicht zu setzen*, *Bild*, etc.), c) pretty much the same holds true for Fichte's view on their connection with each other – so that d) the *Grundriss* gives a very singular answer to the question 'what is a thing?'.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. A very unusual epigenetic ladder

But before we consider the structural ingredients Fichte refers to and examine them one by one, let us take a closer look at their connection to each other (viz. at Fichte's view on how they relate to each other). At first sight we may seem to be putting the cart before the horse. But in this case, it is advisable to follow this path. For one of the main points in Fichte's account of what it takes to make a thing is that the connection between the various ingredients in question is a key element for defining their own nature (that is, what makes each of them as such). In other words, each of the structural ingredients Fichte is referring to is essentially defined by its connection with all the others, and indeed in such a way that it simply cannot be itself without the others. We are inclined to understand structural ingredients as something completely independent from their connection with each other and the latter as something superadded to the former. But Fichte wants us to think the other way around and to realize that what we are dealing with here is like an *organism* whose essential living parts cannot be separated from the whole (that is from one another).

But this is still too vague. We need to be more specific about this topic.

As a matter of fact, Fichte's view on the connection between the various structural ingredients he is referring to rests on three main claims.

First, there is something of a *fixed order* between the structural ingredients in question: one of them – namely what Fichte terms *Empfindung* – provides the basis for all the others. As for the latter, each of them brings something entirely *new*: the second brings something new in comparison with the first, the third brings something new in comparison with the second, and so on and so forth (*Anschauung* with regard to *Empfindung*, *Vermögen zu setzen oder nicht zu setzen* with regard to *Anschauung*, *reines Nicht-Ich* with regard to the *Vermögen zu setzen oder nicht zu setzen*, etc.). In short, to borrow Kant's notion of "epigenesis",<sup>3</sup> Fichte presents what might be described as a succession of *epigenetic* discontinuities and *epigenetic* leaps leading up to the 'thing' as such (viz. to the representation of 'things').

Secondly, in the epigenetic sequence Fichte's *Grundriss* is all about the reason why each superadded element requires the previous one(s) is that it consists in nothing other than a *re-representation* of them (*Anschauung* re-represents *Empfindung*, *Vermögen zu setzen oder nicht zu setzen* re-represents *Anschauung*, etc.). In other words, the new includes the old. The epigenetic element is not something completely *unrelated to the old*,

but rather *the old appearing in a new light: idem sed aliter* (the same, but otherwise). We can also express this by resorting to Aristotle's time-honoured comparison between the ψυχή and geometrical figures – in particular the fact that a *triangle* is always implied by a *quadrilateral* (for the latter is, by nature, a transformed triangle: a triangle + something *else*, which completely transforms it and makes it disappear into the new figure).<sup>4</sup> In short, the point is that each successive term of the epigenetic ladder Fichte's *Grundriss* refers to *contains* and *transforms* its predecessor, so that the former is a *transformed version* of the latter.

But thirdly all this is completely changed by a further claim. The two afore-mentioned features are shared by almost all versions of what might be termed the *scala cognitionis* in the western philosophical tradition, from Plato and Aristotle to Kant. Not so with the third claim, namely that each epigenetic element (i.e., each higher level) is nothing less than *the sole way in which its predecessor is possible* (the point being that *Empfindung* is only possible as *Anschauung*, the latter is only possible as *Bild*, and so on and so forth). In other words, Fichte's view amounts to claiming that each epigenetic element he refers to is the key to how its predecessor is possible (and hence a *sine qua non* for it). *Anschauung* is key to the possibility of *Empfindung*, *Vermögen zu setzen oder nicht zu setzen* is key to the possibility of *Anschauung*, *reines Nicht-Ich* is key to the possibility of *the Vermögen zu setzen oder nicht zu setzen*, etc. And therefore *Anschauung* is a *sine qua non* for *Empfindung*, *Vermögen zu setzen oder nicht zu setzen* is a *sine qua non* for *Anschauung*, etc., etc.

Another way of expressing this is by saying, as Fichte does, that each lower level of the epigenetic scale he is referring to is such because on closer inspection it turns out that it is concerned only with a *product* (*das Produkt*, namely the product of an *act*: eine *Handlung*) and not with the corresponding act itself (*nicht die Handlung selbst*).<sup>5</sup> On the following level of the epigenetic ladder "the act which produced this first product is itself in turn made into a product by means of a new act which is directed at the first act". (*wird die Handlung, durch welche das erste Produkt hervorgebracht wurde, durch eine Handlung, die darauf geht, wieder Produkt*).<sup>6</sup> The point is twofold: first, on each *lower* level, "something is established, without any further determination, to be an act of the mind"; then, on the *subsequent* level "this same thing is posited and further determined", (*was in jeder vorhergehenden ohne weitere Bestimmung als ein Handeln des Geistes aufgestellt wird, wird in jeder folgenden gesetzt und weiter bestimmt*), but in such a manner that, secondly, it turns out that it "must have already been present" on the preceding level, namely "as an act" (*sich schon in der vorigen Deduktion als ein Handeln vorfinden*).<sup>7</sup> The result being that only the highest level in Fichte's epigenetic scale reveals the *complete Handlung* – i. e. the *real Handlung* – the lowest level was already all about.

Now, on the one hand, this means that the epigenetic sequence Fichte's *Grundriss* is all about presents, as it were, a very particular *chain of conditions of possibility*: it presents the 'how' of *Empfindung*, then the 'how of the how', then the 'how of the how of the how', etc. The result being that the representation of 'things' as we know it is not just a further development in the framework of an epigenetic sequence of ever more complex levels of representation, but indeed nothing less than the *key* to the very *basis* of it all, namely *Empfindung*. And this in turn means that the representation of 'things' as we know it turns out to be the only possible way of representation (viz. the only possible content

of appearing) *überhaupt*. According to Fichte's *Grundriss*, it is something so absolutely essential and intrinsic to all representation that *there simply is no alternative to it*.

On the other hand, this view that the lower levels of the epigenetic ladder are a *sine qua non* for the higher ones, but that pretty much the same holds true *the other way around* (for the latter are as much a condition of the former as vice versa) is what provides the concrete basis for the above-mentioned claim concerning the *organic* connection between all the rungs of the epigenetic ladder we are talking about. In other words, this is the reason why the whole epigenetic ladder bears the imprint of *Wechselwirkung* (*reciprocal dependency* or *interdependency*) between all its components and can therefore be described as an *organism*: something whose essential parts simply cannot be themselves without all the others.

So much for the *connection* between the main 'characters' in Fichte's *Grundriss* (namely *Empfindung*, *Anschauung*, *Vermögen zu setzen oder nicht zu setzen*, *reines Nicht-Ich*, *Bild*, etc.).<sup>8</sup>

### 3. The "original fact" and the "original explanation"

Bearing this in mind, let us now take a closer look at each of them, their main distinctive features and the role they play as an essential component of what it takes to make a thing. It goes without saying that a thorough and detailed discussion of this topic would go far beyond the scope of this paper. We must therefore confine ourselves to the essentials.

First of all, it should be borne in mind that Fichte's whole view on this matter is based on the central insight that even if a *thing* is supposed to be *completely independent* from all subjective activity (so that being completely independent from any subjective activity is an essential requirement for it to be a thing), on closer inspection it emerges that this complete and utter independence is but something posited by the very same activity it is supposed to be completely independent from. In other words, the said independence is essentially a *claim* in the framework of subjective activity. It does not belong to the realm of the independent reality it refers to, but rather to the opposite: namely to the realm of subjective activity. And indeed so much so that, no matter how you look at it, it simply cannot be dissociated from the latter. Or to put it in Fichtean terms, contrary to what might be termed its 'face value', no 'thing' belongs to the realm of the simple not-I (i. e. of the absolute not-I, as such). It always belongs to the realm of the I insofar as it "posits itself as determined by the not-I" (*das Ich setzt sich als bestimmt durch das Nicht-Ich*).<sup>9</sup> In short, it comes under what Fichte terms the *fundamental principle* (*Grundsatz*) of the *theoretical Wissenschaftslehre*.<sup>10</sup>

This outlines the overarching framework within which everything else takes place. But all further developments are based on two closely connected cornerstones of Fichte's *Grundriss* (which at the same time are the two cornerstones of his account of what it takes to make a 'thing').

The first is Fichte's claim concerning the only possible way in which "the I can posit itself as determined by the not-I", namely the fact that it finds a check on its original activity (an *Anstoss auf die ursprüngliche Thätigkeit des Ich*) and posits something "which is composed of both directions" (*etwas aus beiden Richtungen zusammengesetztes*), namely "the original direction of the I's activity and the [opposing] direction".<sup>11</sup> According to Fichte's *Grundriss*, the "*Anstoss auf die ursprüngliche Thätigkeit des Ich*" – viz. the fact that

the activity of the I finds itself “checked” by an “opposing direction – is, as it were, the stuff all ‘things’ are made of. If it were not for the said *Anstoss* the I would not be able to “posit itself as determined by the not-I” and there simply would be no room for ‘things’ as such. At the end of the day, ‘things’ are nothing but a variety of the said *etwas aus beiden Richtungen zusammengesetztes*. They consist of an *Anstoss*-related “conflict between the opposing directions of the I’s activity” (*Widerstreit entgegengesetzter Richtungen der Thätigkeit des Ich*).<sup>12</sup> They are but a certain way of positing this conflict.

But this is not all. To be sure, the “original fact” – the said *Anstoss*-related conflict – is a necessary condition for there to be any ‘things’ as such. But it is by no means a *sufficient* condition. In Fichte’s view, there is another equally indispensable condition, which has to do with what he terms the “original explanation” (*ursprüngliche Erklärung*) of the said “original fact”: “Since nothing can be found in the I which the I has not posited within itself (which follows from the concept of the I), the I must posit the fact in question within itself. That is, it must originally explain this fact to itself; it must completely determine it and establish its foundation” (*Da im Ich nichts sei kann, das es nicht in sich setzt so muss es auch jenes Faktum in sich setzen d. i. es muss sich dasselbe ursprünglich erklären, vollständig bestimmen und begründen*).<sup>13</sup> This is not the place to discuss this topic in any detail. So let it suffice to remember that “positing the said original fact – the *Anstoss*-related conflict – within the I” is tantamount to positing it as *activity*. The I must posit the “original fact” in terms of the only kind of determination it is able to posit and to understand, namely *activity*. The original fact must be ‘translated’, as it were, into the only ‘language’ the I ‘speaks’.

Hence, the “original explanation” Fichte’s *Grundriss* refers to has to do with reflection (*Reflexion*), namely with reflection upon the original fact (the *Anstoss*-related conflict between the opposing directions of the I’s activity”). It can be termed *original* reflection (*ursprüngliche Reflexion*) because a) it is *inherent to the I*, as the latter finds itself determined by the said conflict, and b) it takes place “without conscious participation on our part” (*ohne unser wissentliches Zuthun*)<sup>14</sup>, so that c) we find ourselves already shaped by it, and it is, as it were, always already in place before we have any chance of *consciously* reflecting about it.

In Fichte’s view, the original reflection and the ensuing ‘original explanation’ his *Grundriss* refers to have to do with the above-mentioned principle that “nothing pertains to the I except what it posits within itself” (*nichts kommt dem Ich zu, als das, was es in sich setzt*).<sup>15</sup> In the final analysis, the original reflection viz. the original explanation is not something adventitious to the “original fact” itself. On the contrary: it is part and parcel of it, insofar as it cannot take place without being posited by the I within itself (which is precisely what the “original reflection” and the “original explanation” are all about). It is *constitutive* and hence the very opposite of what might be termed an ‘adventitious reflection’ or an ‘adventitious explanation’. In short, it is as much part and parcel of the I (N.B. of the I as it posits itself as determined by the not-I) as is the underlying “original fact” (the *Anstoss*-related conflict) it refers to.

Now, as it turns out, the ‘original explanation’ (the process whereby the I posits the original *Anstoss*-related fact within itself) is the *fons et origo* of the above mentioned ‘epigenetic ladder’. *Empfindung*, *Anschauung*, etc are “the various distinguishable elements in this process of explanation” (*die verschiedenen unterscheidbaren Momente im Fortgang dieser Erklärung*).<sup>16</sup> And the intricate and organic connection we have highlighted above expresses the *interwoven* character of the ‘original explanation’

Fichte's *Grundriss* is all about and the way in which its various components cannot be isolated from one another. And this in turn means that one of the essential features of Fichte's view on what it takes to make a 'thing' is that according to him all 'things' as such are the product not just of the above-mentioned *Anstoss*-related original fact, but also of the said "original reflection and explanation" – so that, surprising as it may seem, *reflection* and *explanation* (namely the 'original explanation' of the *Anstoss*-related fact) are part and parcel of the stuff 'things' – all things: each thing as such – are made of.

## 4. Empfindung

With all this in mind let us now turn our attention to the first rung of the 'epigenetic ladder' (viz. the first of "the various distinguishable elements" in the "process of original explanation"<sup>17</sup>) Fichte's *Grundriss* is all about – namely *Empfindung* or *sensation*.

First, it should be borne in mind that here we are dealing with what might be described as conceptual 'false friends'. Fichte resorts to the traditional terminology: *Empfindung* (viz. *sensatio* or *sensation*). But his understanding of what these words stand for is utterly different from the generally accepted sense (N.B. not because he has a different *phenomenon* viz. a different 'referent' in mind, but because he takes a very different view on what *Empfindung* – viz. the *phenomenon* in question – is all about (i.e. on what it actually consists of). Now it is important to get this right, because in this case, too, a small deviation in the beginning causes large deviations at the end – and indeed so much so that we run the risk of missing the whole point of Fichte's "original explanation" viz. of his "epigenetic ladder" (and therefore the whole point of his answer to the question 'What does it take to make an object?').

The widely held view on *Empfindung* or *sensation* (and the one we tend to assume by default) is that *Empfindung* or *sensation* has to do with sensory qualities impinging themselves upon a receptor and producing some kind of direct contact with them – in such a way that the content of any such *Empfindung* or *sensation* is the sensory quality itself and *Empfindung* or *sensation* as such consists in the reception of sensory qualities: what might be described as a *simple* reception of the *simple* sensory qualities in question (there may be more than one sensory quality being sensed at the same time, but their simultaneous presence results from several different acts of reception, each of which amounts to the simple reception of the simple sensory qualities at stake). Even when it stresses the fact that *Empfindung* or *sensation* results from *being affected* (that it is the effect of something else – and therefore intrinsically *complex*), this view tacitly assumes that the *content* of *Empfindung* itself is something *simple*: a simple sensory quality appearing or imposing its presence (i.e. something like a simple and inert "being there"). Moreover, the widely held view on *Empfindung* or *sensation* takes it to be divided into two domains: the realm of inner and the realm of outer *Empfindung* viz. *sensation*; so that each *Empfindung* or *sensation* is constituted in such a manner that it belongs to one of these two realms. Finally, the widely held view on *Empfindung* or *sensation* teaches what might be described as the primacy of *outer* over *inner* *sensation*: the former precedes the latter and paves the way for it, insofar as the latter is, as it were, but a 'second degree' *sensation*: a *sensation of sensation* (namely of outer *sensation* itself).

Now, Fichte's understanding of *Empfindung* or *sensation* departs from this view in two ways.

**4.1** First, he stresses the fact that *Empfindung* or *sensation* is essentially *Anstoss*-related – i.e. conflict-related. He points out that *Empfindung* or *sensation* has to do with *checked* activity (the activity of the I being *countered*, *inhibited* or *hindered* by an opposing force). But the point is that this does not have to do merely with the origin of *Empfindung* or *sensation*. The point is that the very content of all *Empfindung* or *sensation* bears the imprint of all this; so that, far from consisting in a simple quality, the very content of *sensation* is itself intrinsically made of *activity x activity*: it consists itself in activity of the I being checked or hindered by an opposing force); so that it is itself intrinsically conflict-related (and indeed nothing but conflict-torn activity: *im Widerstreit befindliche Thätigkeit*).<sup>18</sup> We can also express this by saying that *Empfindung* or *sensation* is essentially *Anstoss*-related not in the sense that it results from *Anstoss* (so that its content is a simple quality resulting from *Anstoss*), but in the sense that the sensory content is itself *Anstoss* – includes *Anstoss* and is all about *Anstoss*, i. e. a “mixed activity, an activity which conflicts with and halts itself” (*gemischte, sich selbst widerstrebende, und sich selbst vernichtende Thätigkeit*).<sup>19</sup>

Now, this particular view on the connection between *Empfindung* or *sensation* and *Anstoss* also means the following: contrary to what seems to be the case, each sensory content

1. is intrinsically *composite*, not a simple quality;
2. is always intrinsically *fraught with tension*, not something inert;
3. is always *intrinsically relative to the activity of the I* (and this means: to *real* activity of the I), so that 3.1 it always takes place *in the middle* (or *in the course*) of some activity of the I, 3.2 it is itself *pervaded* by the activity of the I, and indeed in such a manner that 3.3 in the final analysis, it is itself *all about the activity* in question (i. e. about what is going on with the activity of the I viz. about the fact that the latter *finds itself checked* in this or that manner);
4. the result being that the sensory content itself is but *suppressed activity* (*unterdrückte Thätigkeit*), *inhibited*, *cancelled* or *diminished* activity – N.B. not simple *absence of activity*, but rather *hindered* activity (activity in the process of being *hindered*), and indeed so much so that
5. a sensory content never limits itself to being just there: the whole point in *Empfindung* or *sensation* is that the I (i.e. its activity) finds itself ‘tackled’, caught or seized by the sensory content (that is, by *hindered* or *diminished* activity).

Fichte expresses this very particular nature of *Empfindung* by means of an idiosyncratic explanation of the meaning of the word, which reads *Empfindung* as *Insichfindung* (a *finding-within-oneself*).<sup>20</sup> He writes: “Only what is foreign is ever found; what was originally posited in the I is always present.) What is sensed [i.e., what is found within oneself] is that activity of the I which has been cancelled and destroyed. This is sensed (found in the I) and is something foreign insofar as it is suppressed. But it cannot originally be suppressed, nor can it be suppressed by the I itself. This is sensed (found within the I) insofar as it is suppressed only under the condition that an opposing activity is posited, and if this opposing activity were to be abolished, what is sensed [viz., the cancelled activity of the I] would itself be pure activity. (Nur das fremdartige wird gefunden; das ursprünglich im Ich gesetzte ist immer da.) Die aufgehobene vernichtete Thätigkeit des Ich ist das Empfundene. Sie ist **empfundene**, fremdartig, inwiefern sie unterdrückt wird, was sie ursprünglich und durch das Ich selbst gar nicht seyn kann. Sie ist **empfundene**,



*etwas im Ich – inwiefern sie nur unter der Bedingung einer entgegengesetzten Thätigkeit unterdrückt ist, und, wenn diese Thätigkeit wegfiel, selbst Thätigkeit, und reine Thätigkeit seyn würde*).<sup>21</sup> The point of this idiosyncratic etymology is twofold. On the one hand, Fichte stresses the connection between *Empfindung* (*Empfinden*) and *Finden* – i.e. *finding*, as such. Sensation is essentially relative to something *foreign* (*das Fremdartige*) – to a “foreign body”, as it were: foreign to the activity of the I (standing in its way, *interfering* with it, countering it, meddling with it), as opposed to the fact a) that the activity of the I must be constitutively there (*immer da*) *before any such finding* and b) provides the medium in which the latter can take place. On the other hand, according to Fichte, the prefix “Ent-” expresses this very fact: that the finding in question takes place *within the I* (*im Ich*), and indeed so much so that *das Fremdartige* (the ‘foreign body’ itself) is and must be sensed *within the I* – as something ‘tackling’, as it were, the activity of the I and preventing it from being pure activity. In short, the point is that in this case both the *finding* and the *found* are nothing but *modifications of the activity of the I* (*modified activity of the I*).

4.2 Secondly, Fichte’s account of sensation differs from the widely held view because, according to him, *Empfindung* has nothing to do with the said *either-or* between the two alleged realms of *inner* and *outer sensation*, and there is no such thing as a primacy of the latter over the former.

To be sure, Fichte’s *Empfindung* is essentially conflict-torn and intrinsically related to the two opposite activities it is made of. As pointed out above, its very content is constitutively related both to the I and to the not-I. And the whole point in Fichte’s view seems to be that *das Empfundene* constitutively *refers to* and is *in contact with* the two opposite factors of the conflict or *Widerstreit* it is all about – namely what might be described as an *inner* and an *outer* field of activity. In other words, *Empfindung* (and indeed *das Empfundene*) is nothing but *mixed* activity; but precisely because it has this *mixed* nature, it constitutively refers to and is in contact with what the *Grundriss* terms the two “pure activities”: the “pure activity” of the I and the “pure activity” of the not-I.<sup>22</sup> To this extent, Fichte’s *Empfindung* (and indeed its content: *das Empfundene*) seems to suit the contrast between inner and outer sensation. And, on the other hand, everything in Fichte’s account of *Empfindung* seems to stress that all sensation is primarily related to the not-I. So that, as Fichte puts it, *Empfindung* is “the ultimate reason why the I goes beyond itself and posits something outside of itself. For here, for the first time, something disengages itself from the I (...), something which, by means of further determination, will gradually transform itself into a universe with all of its characteristic features (*der letzte Grund, warum das Ich aus sich herausgeht, und etwas ausser sich setzt. Hier löst sich (...) etwas ab von dem Ich; welches durch weitere Bestimmung sich allmählig in ein Universum mit allen seinen Merkmalen verwandeln wird*).<sup>23</sup> And this may give the impression that Fichte’s account of *Empfindung* endorses the said primacy claim.

However, this impression proves to be completely misleading.

As a matter of fact, according to Fichte’s *Grundriss* all *Empfindung* is essentially indifferent to the contrast between inner and outer sensation (let alone to anything even remotely resembling a primacy of the latter over the former). *Empfindung* (and indeed its content) is, of course, intrinsically related both to the I and the Not I, but in such a way that it does not present either of them. That is, it *leaves them out*, as it were, and presents just the ‘mesh’ of both (neither of the two *pure* activities, just the *mixed*

activity as such: *I* × *not-I*). In other words, the *I* and the *not-I* – viz. their opposite pure activities – are essentially involved. But the point is precisely that they do not appear as *themselves* or *in their own role*. The said mixed activity (the *Widerstreit* or *conflict* as such) is the sole content in sight. We can also express this by saying that the only content of *Empfindung* is the epicentre of the conflict or *Widerstreit* in question. A complete 'eclipse' of the pure elements in question (both the *I* and the *not-I*) is an essential feature of this first rung of the epigenetic ladder. And pretty much the same holds true for what might be termed the structural elements of sensation, notably the *sensed object* (*der Gegenstand der Empfindung*) and the *sensing subject* (*das Empfindende*). However involved they may be in *Empfindung* (as intrinsic constituents and *sine quibus non* factors of all sensation), they simply do not feature in the sensory content as such.

This cannot be emphasized enough. For it is as much a characteristic feature of Fichte's view on *Empfindung* as the above-mentioned claim that the latter has nothing to do with simple sensory qualities, that it is always intrinsically activity-related, etc. If one is not keenly aware of these two sides of the coin, one simply misses the particularity of Fichte's account.

The *Grundriss* could hardly be more peremptory in this respect. Fichte writes: "The subject of sensation, or sensor, is of course the *I* that (in the action we have derived) is engaged in relating. Of course this *I*, to the extent that it senses, is not itself sensed. Thus we are not concerned with this *I* at this point. (...) Nor are we here concerned with the opposing activity of the *not-I*, which is excluded in sensation. Like the relating *I*, this activity is not sensed, for it must be excluded if sensation is to be possible at all. (*Das Empfindende ist begreiflicherweise das in der abgeleiteten Handlung beziehende Ich; und dasselbe wird begreiflicherweise nicht empfunden, inwiefern es empfindet; und es ist demnach hier von demselben gar nicht die Rede. (...) Ebensowenig ist hier die Rede von der in der Empfindung ausgeschlossenen entgegengesetzten Thätigkeit des Nicht-Ich; denn auch diese wird nicht empfunden, da sie ja zum Behuf der Möglichkeit der Empfindung überhaupt ausgeschlossen werden muss.*)<sup>24</sup>

And at the beginning of section 2 he insists: "In the preceding section sensation has been deduced as an action of the *I*, through which the *I* appropriates and relates to itself something foreign which it has found within itself. We became acquainted with both this action itself (sensation) and the object of this action (that which is sensed). However, the sensor (the *I* engaged in this action) and the activity of the *not-I* (which, in sensation, is excluded and is opposed to the *I*) remained unknown (...)" (*Es ist im vorigen § deducirt worden die Empfindung als eine Handlung des Ich, durch welche dasselbe etwas in sich aufgefundenes fremartiges auf sich bezieht, sich zueignet, in sich setzt. Wir lernten kennen sowohl diese Handlung selbst, oder die Empfindung, als den Gegenstand derselben, das Empfundene. Unbekannt blieb (...) sowohl das Empfindende, das in jener Handlung thätige Ich, als auch die in der Empfindung ausgeschlossene, und dem Ich entgegengesetzte Thätigkeit des Nicht-Ich.*)<sup>25</sup>

To put it pointedly: in itself (or for itself) *Empfindung* is just *das Empfundene* (that which is sensed): the bare *Empfundenes*, and nothing else. In order to understand the full meaning of this, one has to bear in mind that "das Empfundene" denotes the bare content of *Empfindung* as sensed by *Empfindung* itself – and not the pure *not-I* viz. the pure activity of the *not-I* (*die in der Empfindung ausgeschlossene, und dem Ich entgegengesetzte Thätigkeit des Nicht-Ich*)<sup>26</sup> The mere fact that we speak of *Empfindung* makes us think of the whole set: a) of *Empfindung* itself, b) of its content (*das*

*Empfundene*), c) of the sensor (*das Empfindende*), and d) of the not-I viz. the object *Empfindung* is supposed to be all about. But the crux of the matter is that from the point of view of *Empfindung* itself (i. e. seen from the perspective of *Empfindung*) there is no such complex set of different elements: as a matter of fact, there is nothing but *das Empfundene* itself. And even if there can be no *Empfundenes* without *Empfindung* (the activity of *Empfinden* as such), the fact remains that the latter is *completely absorbed in its content* – so that this being-completely-absorbed-in-its content is one of the essential features of *Empfindung* or sensation as such.

Now this gives us a glimpse into another facet of the connection between *Empfindung* and sensory qualities. The complete absorption in *das Empfundene* viz. in the intersection point (or crossover point: in the *Grenzpunkt*)<sup>27</sup> between the two conflicting activities at stake – and the corresponding ‘eclipse’ of the latter as pure activities (owing to which they act as ‘grey eminences’ in the background and remain completely inconspicuous) – make the content of *Empfindung* confusingly similar to a simple quality.

It is as if *Empfindung* were the *resultant* of a system of forces (the combined system of the I and the not-I and of their pure activities), the point being that the ‘resultant’ in question makes itself notably felt, while the two components of the force system remain *outside the sensory content* and hence beyond the horizon of *Empfindung*.<sup>28</sup>

And this in turn enables us to understand how Fichte’s account also includes an explanation of the widely held view on sensation or *Empfindung*. As pointed out above, this widely held view fails to notice several important features of *Empfindung* as such, to wit a) the composite nature of what it deems to be simple, b) the essential connection between *Empfindung* and activity viz. the fact that the sensory content is itself all about *Anstoss* (real activity caught in something that counters it), etc., etc. But this is not all. Fichte’s account draws our attention to another point, namely the fact that the widely held view on sensation fails to notice *its own composite nature* – namely that it combines (and confuses) *Empfindung* proper with a further reflexive transformation of *Empfindung* viz. with the second step of the “original explanation” Fichte’s *Grundriss* is all about, to wit *Anschauung*. The point is that the widely held view looks back at *Empfindung* or sensation through the spectacles of *Anschauung*, the result being that it projects features of *Anschauung* into *Empfindung*. The *Grundriss* tries to undo this mistake and to extract, as it were, or to uncover the particular nature of *Empfindung* proper.

So much for the first rung of Fichte’s epigenetic ladder. It hardly needs emphasizing that, even though *Empfindung* is a *sine qua non* of things, it is itself after all not much of a thing (there is not much of a ‘thing’ in it). And this is why, according to Fichte, for there to be any ‘things’, *Empfindung* must be transformed into the second rung of his epigenetic ladder, namely *Anschauung*. So let us take a closer look at this second rung.

## 5. Anschauung

What we have just seen provides a good starting point for understanding what Fichte’s *Anschauung* stands for. Among other things, *Empfindung* is characterized by the said twofold eclipse (both an eclipse of the I as such viz. of its pure activity and an eclipse of the not-I viz. of its pure activity). What characterizes *Anschauung* is the fact that it overcomes this twofold eclipse. In other words, the distinctive feature of this second rung of Fichte’s epigenetic ladder is that *Anschauung* (and only *Anschauung*) – precisely

because it goes beyond *Empfindung* – brings to pass what the said widely held view on *Empfindung* attributes to *Empfindung* itself – namely both

- a. that it has to do with sensory qualities impinging themselves upon a 'receptor' and producing some kind of direct contact with them – in such a way that the 'reception' itself is precisely just that (the pure I as 'sensor' or 'receiver'), and the content of any such 'reception' is the sensory quality itself (a pure not-I that is sensed or 'received') in such a manner that *its presence* is something like a simple and "inert" "being there", and
- b. that it has to do with the contrast between an inner and an outer domain – so that each such reception pertains to one of the two domains in question.

In comparison with *Empfindung* Fichte's *Anschauung* or intuition *widens the angle*. *Anschauung* has to do with 'inclusion of the excluded', namely with 1) inclusion of the pure I viz. of pure activity of the I as such (viz. inclusion of the sensor – *das Empfindende* – as such, and 2) inclusion of the pure not-I viz. of the pure activity of the not-I as such (viz. inclusion of the pure object of sensation). In other words, *Anschauung* has to do with an extraordinary expansion of the framework: it explodes, as it were, the narrow framework of *Empfindung* by letting in (into 'appearance') what *Empfindung* as such has to leave out. We can also express this by saying that *Anschauung* incorporates the excluded extremes (*die "ausgeschlossenen äussersten Enden"*)<sup>29</sup> of sensation. And this is closely connected with Fichte's above-mentioned view on how a lower level of his epigenetic ladder is related to the *product* of a given act, whereas only the subsequent epigenetic level unveils the act in question<sup>30</sup>; *Empfindung* does not perceive itself but only *das Empfundene* (the sensory content); *Anschauung* is where *Empfindung* (N.B. not *Empfindung* as a product, but *Empfindung* as a *Handlung*) makes its first appearance.

But this is not sufficiently precise. To be more precise, it should be said that *Anschauung* provides a *certain* way of including what *Empfindung* must leave out. The crux of the matter is the *particular* way in which *Anschauung* brings this to pass. And one of the distinctive features of *Anschauung* in the Fichtean sense of the word is that there is *reciprocal dependency* or *interdependency* (*Wechselwirkung*) between the two 'extensions of borders' we are talking about: a) the extension towards the I and the pure activity of the I viz. the extension towards the *sensor* (*das Empfindende*) and b) the extension towards the pure not-I and the pure object of sensation. According to Fichte's *Grundriss*, neither of them can take place without the other. So that the leap of *Anschauung* is possible only *uno tenore* ('in one fell swoop', as it were).

But this is not all. The crux of the matter is Fichte's view on the concrete way in which this takes place.

The root of it all is the conflict (*Widerstreit*) or inner tension inherent in *Empfindung* as such and which triggers all further developments. It provides the basis for what might be described as the *extraction* or *isolation* of its two poles, namely the I and the not-I (viz. their corresponding pure activities), which are extracted, as it were, from the ore (the mixed activity viz. the mesh) of *Empfindung*. This transformation process has a threefold result: first, it provides the access to the said "excluded extremes": it makes them appear and brings them into the equation; secondly, it shifts the focus from *Empfindung* itself to the "newcomers", so that the pure I and the pure not-I (viz. the sensor and the sensed object) become, as it were, the two main characters; thirdly, the newcomers now serve as principles for explaining the said conflict viz. *Empfindung* itself.

In other words, *Anschauung* turns out to be all about a *split* or *fission* of the original mesh – namely **I × not-I, Empfindung × Empfundenes** (i.e. *Empfindung* completely absorbed in *das Empfundene*). That is, *Anschauung* is all about *differentiation of the undifferentiated* and the transmutation of *Empfindung* into the result of this differentiation. As pointed out above, one key feature of this differentiation-process is the fact that it goes in two opposite directions and has two *termini ad quos*. But then again the key is not so much the fact that *Empfindung* splits into two separate domains (and that the latter have to do with the pure I and the pure not-I) as the concrete way in which the two domains in question make their appearance in *Anschauung*: i.e. in what light the pure I and the pure not-I (the sensor and the sensed object) appear to what Fichte terms *Anschauung*.

First, it should be borne in mind that in the light of *Anschauung* the whole (the whole horizon) looks quite different. In the realm of sensation there is nothing but mixed activity (the above-mentioned 'mesh' and above all *das Empfundene*). The latter is, as it were, the *sole content*. Whereas in the realm of *Anschauung*, the whole horizon of *Empfindung* becomes the *middle term* between the two said extremes (*äusserste Enden*), namely the pure I and the pure not-I – one of which is, as it were, *more inward* than the most inward in *Empfindung*, while the other manages to be more exterior than the most exterior in *Empfindung* (i.e. than *das Empfundene* itself).

Secondly, it should be borne in mind that the isolated activity of the I is posited as something *previous* to *Empfindung*, and therefore as an "activity which is not suppressed or hindered by any opposing force" (*als nicht unterdrückt, noch gehemmt durch eine entgegengesetzte Kraft*).<sup>31</sup> Something similar applies to the isolated not-I. It, too, is posited as something *previous* to *Empfindung* – and therefore as something in *its own right* (as an *autonomous* and *self-contained* not-I). But the point is that *Empfindung* must be some kind of *relation* between both (namely between pure, completely unhindered activity of the I, on the one hand, and an entirely autonomous and self-contained not-I, on the other). What is more, the said relation must combine both features: it must be a) pure, unhindered activity (for otherwise it would not pertain to the pure I), but also b) passivity or *Leiden* (for otherwise it would not be related or directed to the pure not-I: it would not *conform* to it). And this means that it must be "a *tertium quid* which is activity (of the I) and passivity (suppressed activity) at the same time (*ein bestimmtes drittes (...) das Thätigkeit (des Ich) und zugleich Leiden (unterdrückter Thätigkeit) sey*).<sup>32</sup> Or, as Fichte also puts it, it must have the I as its *Real-Grund*<sup>33</sup> and the not-I as its *Ideal-Grund*.<sup>34</sup> However, it is not just a matter of combining both: the point is rather that "its *Ideal-Grund* and *Real-Grund* should be intimately united; they should be one and the same. (*Ideal- und Real-Grund sollen in ihm innig vereinigt, Eins und ebendasselbe seyn*).<sup>35</sup>

Put another way, the action in question must be of a very special nature. "It is an action of the I and must be capable of being regarded as something which has its basis solely and entirely in the I. At the same time it must be capable of being regarded as the product of an activity of the not-I, as something which, in all of its specific determinations, has its basis in the not-I (*Es ist ein Handeln des Ich, und soll sich seiner ganzen Bestimmung nach betrachten lassen, als bloss und lediglich im Ich begründet*)<sup>36</sup> *Es soll sich zugleich betrachten lassen als Produkt eines Handelns des Nicht-Ich, als allen seinen Bestimmungen nach im Nicht-Ich begründet*)<sup>37</sup> In short, the activity in question must combine activity and passivity in such a manner that "each should be exactly what the other is" (*Die eine soll gerade seyn, was die andere ist, und umgekehrt*).<sup>38</sup>

According to Fichte, this is what *Anschauung* is all about. And, what is more, *Anschauung* is the only kind of activity that meets these conflicting requirements, and “one can see at once that the act in question must be one of intuiting (so *sieht man sogleich, dass die Handlung ein Anschauen seyn müsse*).<sup>39</sup>

This unique blend of properties is reflected in the inner connection between *Anschauung* (viz. the intuiting I) and *das Angesehene* (the intuited content viz. the intuited not-I). On the one hand, “the I contemplates a not-I, and this act of contemplating is all that pertains to the I at this point. It posits itself, as such, in this act of contemplating, and it does so completely independently of the not-I. It engages in contemplation entirely on its own and without the slightest external compulsion“ (*Das Ich betrachtet ein Nicht-Ich, und es kommt ihm hier weiter nichts zu, als das Betrachten. Es setzt sich in der Betrachtung, als solcher, völlig unabhängig vom Nicht-Ich; es betrachtet aus eigenem Antriebe ohne die geringste Nöthigung von aussen (...)*).<sup>40</sup> But on the other hand, *Anschauung* “posits these properties as copies of something present outside of the I. These copied properties are supposed to be actually encountered in what takes place outside the I – and not merely because they were posited in consciousness, but in a manner completely independent from the I (*Aber es setzt dieselben als Nachbildungen eines ausser ihm Vorhandenen. - In diesem ausser ihm Vorhandenen sollen nun die nachgebildeten Merkmale wirklich anzutreffen seyn, und zwar nicht etwa zufolge des Gesetzseyns im Bewusstseyn, sondern völlig unabhängig vom Ich (...)*).<sup>41</sup>

But this is not all. The characteristic interlocking of activity and passivity which inheres in *Anschauung* does not prevent it from being associated with a particular kind of *forgetfulness*, owing to which the awareness of its own passivity tends to prevail over the awareness of its own activity “(..) the I forgets itself in the object of its activity. Here we have an activity which appears to be only passivity (..). Intuition is the name of this action, a silent, unconscious contemplation, which loses itself in its object.” (*Also das Ich vergisst in dem Objecte seiner Thätigkeit sich selbst, und wir haben eine Thätigkeit, die lediglich als ein Leiden erscheint (...). Diese Handlung heisst eine Anschauung; eine stumme, bewusstseynlose Contemplation, die sich im Gegenstande verliert.*)<sup>42</sup> The result being that *Anschauung* goes hand in hand with a *prominence of the object* – around which everything else seems to revolve.

To sum up, in its own eyes *Anschauung* is rooted both a) in the isolated, autonomous and self-contained I and b) in the isolated, autonomous and self-contained not-I. It acts as an *intermediary* between both, bridging the gap between them in such a way that its complete *dependency on the one* does not prevent it from being nothing but a *genuine replica of the other*: “The not-I does not produce the intuition in the I; nor does the I produce the attribute of the not-I. They must be completely independent of each other, and yet in the closest harmony.” (*Das Nicht-Ich bringt nicht die Anschauung im Ich, das Ich bringt nicht die Beschaffenheit des Nicht-Ich hervor, sondern beide sollen völlig unabhängig von einander seyn, und dennoch soll zwischen beiden die innigste Harmonie seyn.*)<sup>43</sup>

All this gives an insight into the inner composition of what might be termed the “world of *Anschauung*” and on how *Anschauung* plays a significant role in bridging the gap between *Empfindung* (viz. its content) and a ‘thing’.

On the one hand, the world of *Anschauung* is made up of two separate realms, which are connected by *limitation* (*Begrenzung*): the realm of the intuiting I and the realm of the intuited not-I. The explanandum of *Anschauung*, namely sensation “is possible only to the extent that the I and the not-I mutually limit each other, and it is possible only

upon the boundary between them. (This boundary is the actual point of union between the I and the not-I.) They have no other point in common, nor could they, since they are supposed to be completely opposed to each other. Beyond this common point their ways part.” (*Das Empfinden ist lediglich insofern möglich, inwiefern das Ich und Nicht-Ich sich gegenseitig begrenzen, und nicht weiter, als auf dieser, beiden gemeinschaftlichen Grenze. (Diese Grenze ist der eigentliche Vereinigungspunct des Ich und Nicht-Ich. Nichts haben sie gemein, als diese, und können auch nichts weiter gemein haben, da sie einander völlig entgegengesetzt seyn sollen. Von diesem gemeinschaftlichen Puncte aus aber scheiden sie sich; (...)).*<sup>44</sup>

But on the other hand, everything depends on the fact that *Anschauung* or intuition crosses the said boundary and thereby a) transfers something from itself to what is supposed to lie on the other side and b) absorbs into itself something which is supposed to pertain to what lies on the other side: “From here the I becomes an intellect (*Intelligenz*) only by freely crossing this boundary and thereby transferring something from itself to what is supposed to lie on the other side of this boundary. Considered from another point of view, the I becomes an intellect by absorbing into itself something which is supposed to pertain to what lies on the other side of this boundary.” (*von ihm aus wird das Ich erst Intelligenz, indem es frei über die Grenze schreitet, und dadurch etwas aus sich selbst, über sie hinüber, und auf dasjenige, was über derselben liegen soll, überträgt; oder, wenn man die Sache von einer anderen Seite ansieht, indem es etwas, das nur dem über derselben liegenden zukommen soll, in sich selbst aufnimmt*).<sup>45</sup>

But two final points deserve attention here.

Firstly, as mentioned before, Fichte’s *Anschauung* is characterized not only a) by the fact that it widens the angle in such a way that both the pure I and the pure not-I (the sensor and what is sensed) enter the stage as complete characters in their own right, upon which everything depends, but also b) by the particular way in which this is done. In this respect it should be borne in mind that the I appears solely as *Anschauung* and the not-I appears solely as the correlate of *Anschauung*: as that which is contemplated and thereby copied or replicated (*nachgebildet*) by *Anschauung*. In other words, there is an eclipse both of the real activity of the I and of the real activity of the not-I: they both remain completely out of sight of *Anschauung* (in a blind spot, so to speak). *Anschauung* erases its origins. It masks, as it were, everything it has to do with: both *Empfindung* and what it “extracts” from it. It is *Insichfindung* in the guise of purely contemplative intuition, hindered activity in the guise of purely intuited qualities (i.e. of a vorhandene Nicht-Ich), a product of reflection in the guise of immediate contact, the ὕστερον in the guise of a πρότερον. In short, *Anschauung* is constitutively made of *Vergessenheit*. And the above-mentioned fact that its contemplative activity forgets itself in the object and appears to be only passivity is just the ‘icing on the cake’.

Secondly, we should not forget that Fichte draws our attention to another decisive factor, namely the role played by what he terms the “feeling of compulsion” (*Gefühl des Zwanges*).<sup>46</sup> A thorough discussion of his remarks on this subject would go beyond the scope of this paper. We must therefore confine ourselves to a brief sketch.

According to Fichte, the “feeling of compulsion” (*Gefühl des Zwanges*) shapes the whole epigenetic ladder he is referring to in such a manner that it is part and parcel of each and every ‘thing’ as such: no ‘thing’ can be such without bearing its imprint. And the gist of his view on this topic can be summarized as follows:

- a. The “compulsion” (*Zwang*) is naturally imputed to the intuited not-I: “(...) I explain this feeling to myself on the basis of the intuited not-I” (*Ich erkläre mir das Gefühl (...) aus dem*

*angeschauten Nicht-Ich*)<sup>47</sup>; or, as Fichte also puts it, “(...) what I see is the reason for the compulsion I feel.” (*das was ich sehe, ist der Grund des gefühlten Zwangs*).<sup>48</sup>

- b. But this is just the way the *Gefühl des Zwanges* is explained by the I. To be sure, this explanation (viz. the connection between the *Gefühl des Zwanges* and the intuited not-I) is part and parcel of the phenomenon in question. But the fact remains that, on the other hand, the said explanation has a *derived character* and stems from something else.
- c. Firstly, it stems from the “original fact” (viz. the *Anstoss*-related conflict).
- d. Secondly it also stems from the *inevitability* or the *compulsive character of reflection*,<sup>49</sup> and this means both d.1 from the fact that reflection cannot be helped, and d.2 from the fact that reflection viz. its results seem to be *absolutely cogent* or *compelling*.
- e. These two components merge together in such a manner that the *compulsive character of reflection* (viz. of its results) constitutes a second source in its own right (in addition to the “original fact”), but at the same time derives strength from its connection with the “original fact”.
- f. The two sources are confused with one another (or rather: what is composed both of c) and d) is taken either to be just c) or to be just the immediate product of the object of intuition (since one fails to realize that intuition and its object are themselves a mix of *Empfindung* – viz. the “original fact” – and reflection)
- g. This *hybrid* and *unanalysed* form of the *Gefühl des Zwanges* is, as it were, one of the standard ingredients of each and every ‘thing’ as such.

## 6. A twofold metamorphosis

From the above it is clear that *Anschauung* moves significantly beyond *Empfindung* and it is no doubt closer to a ‘thing’ than sensation. Nevertheless, it remains still far removed from a ‘thing’ as such (still with a long way to go before a ‘thing’, in the full sense of the word, enters the stage).

Our next task is to follow two closely connected developments in Fichte’s epigenetic sequence. Both of them result from *Anschauung*, which carries within itself the seeds of further reflexion and therefore of further steps in the process of what Fichte terms the “original explanation”.

The first development we are referring to has to do with the fact that *Anschauung* as such enables the I to appropriate sensation (*Empfindung*) – i.e. to posit it within itself – but not to appropriate ‘what is sensed’ (*das Empfundene*): the isolated Not-I intuition is all about. As a matter of fact, the latter remains completely outside of the I. It does not belong to the subjective realm of the I or of intuition (*Anschauung*): it defines itself by purely objective viz. pure not-I. But on the other hand, as pointed out above, intuition must “cross the boundary” and “transfer something of itself to what is supposed to lie on the other side” and “absorb into itself something from it”. Now, this conflicting border demarcation is the starting point for further reflexion and triggers a significant change in the self-understanding of *Anschauung* and therefore in the whole picture.

*Anschauung* or intuition realizes that everything depends on its own activity – and indeed so much so that even ‘what is sensed’ insofar as it is sensed (*das Empfundene als Empfundenes*) – we could also say *das Angeschaut als Angeschautes* (the intuited as intuited) – has its basis in the I, namely in what Fichte terms the I’s ‘ability to posit-or-not-to-posit’ (*Vermögen zu setzen und nicht zu setzen*). The point is that, at the end of the day, if the I viz. *Anschauung* does not posit something as sensed viz. as intuited, there



simply is no room for any *Empfundenes* or *Angeschautes* as such. And the key is, of course, not the *Setzen* or the *Nichtsetzen* as separate instances, but the *either/or* itself: the “zu setzen oder nicht zu setzen” – the ability to *posit* and at the same time *not to posit* – as such. In other words, the subjective power of either positing or non-positing (*Setzen oder Nichtsetzen*) turns out to be the essential condition upon which *das Empfundene* itself depends. The “not-I is posited as a merely contingent condition of what is sensed” (*dass das Nicht Ich als bloss zufällige Bedingung des Empfundenen gesetzt werde*).<sup>50</sup> Hence, the Not-I – insofar as it must be sensed or intuited for there to be any relation to it (i.e. insofar as it is something one is referring to and therefore aware of) turns out to be something *posited*. It therefore lies within the sphere of power of the ‘ability to posit-or-not-to-posit’ – which has its basis solely within the I. In other words, the posited not-I – the posited *pure-not-I* itself – turns out to be not on the *other* side, but on *this* side (on the *subjective* and intrinsically *I-related* side) of the border between the I and the not-I.

To be sure, at least at first sight, this seems to hold true just for the *sensed* or *intuited* not-I. The pure not-I seems to remain excluded and to keep its full independence from the said *Vermögen* (and therefore from the I and its power of intuition). But on closer inspection it emerges that this is not so. Paradoxically enough, the pure not-I, too, is and must be *posited*. So that it, too, turns out to be *not* on the *other* side, but on *this* side (on the *subjective* and intrinsically *I-related* side) of the border between the I and the not-I. One can, of course, repeat the attempt and turn to a “new” (to a second, a third, a fourth, etc.) not-I – namely one which is supposed *not to be posited* (and therefore to evade the power of the I, so that it lies *completely beyond its sphere: on the other side of the border*). But on closer inspection it emerges that this other not-I (the ‘purer’ not-I), too, is *posited*. It therefore lies on *this* side (on the *subjective* and intrinsically *I-related* side) of the border between the I and the not-I.

Fichte describes this in the following terms: “Insofar as the I is limited, it extends only up to the boundary. Insofar as it posits itself as limited, it necessarily goes beyond this boundary: it extends to the boundary itself, to the boundary as such—and, since a boundary is nothing apart from two opposing things, whatever extends to the boundary as such must also extend to what lies beyond the boundary in question.” (*Inwiefern das Ich begrenzt ist, geht es nur bis an die Grenze. Inwiefern es sich setzt, als begrenzt, geht es nothwendig darüber hinaus; es geht auf die Grenze selbst, als solche, und da eine Grenze nichts ist, ohne zwei entgegengesetzte, auch auf das über derselben liegende*).<sup>51</sup> Hence, every extension of the border or limit between the I and the not-I (every attempt to draw a new border or limit between them) presupposes an underlying extension of the *positing I* – so that the latter goes beyond the new boundary in question and lies beyond it. It is therefore no exaggeration to speak, as Fichte does, of an activity “which is supposed to go on and on and never to be limited” (*hinausgehen, immer fortgehen; und nirgends begrenzt seyn soll*)<sup>52</sup> viz. of something “continually hovering and floating away” (*fortschwebend*)<sup>53</sup> – i.e., of an “unlimited” and “unlimitable activity” (*unbegrenzte und unbegrenzbare Thätigkeit*).<sup>54</sup>

In short, not even the pure not-I (one feels tempted to say: not even the *purest* not-I one can think of) “lies beyond the circumference of the I” (*ein Nicht-Ich liegt nie ausserhalb des Umkreises des Ich*).<sup>55</sup> And this in turn means that, at the end of the day, there simply is *no Grenze* (no limit or boundary) between the I and the not-I. Or as Fichte puts it, the *Grenze* in question is “simultaneously posited and not-posited” (*ist gesetzt und nicht-gesetzt zugleich*).<sup>56</sup>

It hardly need emphasizing that all this amounts to an extraordinary *hypertrophy of the positing and non-positing I* (viz of its activity), owing to which the positing and non-positing I becomes, as it were, *all-embracing*, while the pure not-I – viz its real activity – recedes, as it were, into an endless distance. The result being that, for all ends and purposes, the pure not-I ends up quite simply *excluded*.

So much for the first reflexive development we are talking about. Let us now consider the second.

As pointed out above, *Anschauung* is characterized by a certain *symmetry* or *equilibrium* between its two poles, the autonomous and self-contained I, on the one hand, and the autonomous and self-contained not-I, on the other. But because reflexion on *Anschauung* cannot fail to realize that the latter depends on the *Vermögen zu setzen oder nicht zu setzen*, it gives rise to a new perspective and thereby undermines the said equilibrium. In a word, there is something unstable about the symmetric relation between the two poles of *Anschauung*. And the result of this instability is what we have termed the *hypertrophy of the I*: the *unhindered expansion* of an *all-embracing I* activity.

Now, according to Fichte, this displacement from the 'equilibrium position' gives rise to what might be described as a *pendulum movement*. The disappearance of the border between the I and the not-I proves to be *unacceptable*, not only because of the above mentioned "original fact" (viz. the *Anstoss*-related conflict) but because the *I cannot be posited without limiting it* (positing it as *limited*). "The I can in no way posit itself for itself without limiting itself and hence transcending itself" (*Das Ich kann sich für sich überhaupt nicht setzen, ohne sich zu begrenzen, und demzufolge aus sich herauszugehen*)<sup>57</sup> "As surely as it is an I and is supposed to be limited, it must posit itself as limited; that is, it must posit in opposition to itself something which limits it. (*Es muss, so gewiss es ein Ich und begrenzt seyn soll, sich als begrenzt setzen, d. i. es muss ein begrenzendes sich entgegensetzen.*)"<sup>58</sup> To be sure, this means that both the limit and what lies beyond it must be *posited* by the I. But the point is that they must be posited a) as a *real boundary* (as an effective *limit* to the power of the I) and b) as something really lying *beyond the boundary* between the I and the not-I. In other words, the *Herausgehen* (the transcending movement in question) must put all the weight in its facial value (the fact that it is all about the pure not-I), not in the fact that the latter, too, must be posited. And this means that *Anschauung* is *restored* to its characteristic *forgetfulness*, owing to which, as pointed out above, the awareness of its own passivity tends to prevail over the awareness of its own activity and "(..) the I forgets itself in the object of its activity".

We can also express this by saying that the reflection on the all-embracing power of the positing and non-positing I ultimately leads to a *countermovement* or *counter-reaction*. The more immediate results of the said reflection prove *unstable* and indeed *untenable*. And reflection *swings back to the equilibrium position*. Or, to be more precise, the restoring movement swings back not to the equilibrium position, but to the *opposite pole*, namely to what might be described as the primacy of the objective over the subjective component and the understanding of intuition as something basically rooted in *Leiden* or passivity and intrinsically relative to a pure not-I.

This countermovement or counter-reaction – namely the counter-movement against the 'hypertrophy of the I' viz. against its *unhindered expansion* as an *all-embracing* subjective activity – is what makes up the second development: the second metamorphosis of *Anschauung*. And the point is a) that this second metamorphosis is only possible after the first (for the latter paves the way for the former), and b) that

this second metamorphosis plays a key role in transforming *Anschauung* viz. its content into a 'thing' proper.

As pointed out above, the 'Archimedean point' for this second metamorphosis is the *indispensability* of the limit (*Grenze*) between the pure I and the pure not-I, the *indispensability* of the pure (autonomous and self-contained) not-I, the *indispensability* of *Leiden* (of a significant degree of passivity) and the *indispensability* of the primacy of the Not-I as the root of what is intuited. For the sake of brevity, we can speak of the *primacy of the recovered not-I*. We can also speak of '*inverted primacy*' and thereby express the fact that it simply cannot take place without the first metamorphosis (i.e. without the *threat of the all-embracing I* viz. of the all-embracing subjective activity).

And it is hardly necessary to say that the 'recovered not-I' viz. the 'inverted primacy' we are talking about leads to a complete change of perspective. For

- a. it posits the *non-positing* – and this means it brackets the corresponding positing- and non-positing-activity; it defies and resists its threat, imposing a limit to the allegedly unlimitable subjective activity (*unbegrenzbare Tätigkeit*) and stopping its *Fortschweben*; it prevails over it, and puts in place a *stronghold of resistance* of the pure Not-I;
- b. it sees intuition through the lens of this 'inverted primacy'; i.e. it sees everything in terms of this *stronghold of resistance* to the primacy of the I; the new "not-I" around which it revolves is no longer the simple not-I *Anschauung* is all about from the very beginning (the one which proves unable to resist the threat of the all-embracing I – i.e. what we have termed the first metamorphosis); it is something else: a *confirmed* and *strengthened* version of the pure Not-I (a *prestressed* Not-I, as it were – namely the one which overcame the crucial test of the said first metamorphosis).

The point in all this is that the "Not I", too, – N.B. the pure not-I (the *autonomous* and *self-contained* not-I) – turns out to be *equivocal* and indeed a 'conceptual false friend'. On the one hand, there is the "simple" pure-Not-I (let us term it the *first pure-not-I* or the *first outer world* – namely the one that is *not immune* to the *threat of the all-embracing I* viz. to the said first metamorphosis). On the other hand, there is the '*recovered*' not-I or the *stronghold of resistance* to the all-embracing power of subjectivity – something intrinsically rooted in the above-mentioned 'Archimedean point' (that is, the reflexive realization that the limit (*Grenze*) between the pure I and the pure not-I, the pure (autonomous and self-contained) not-I, etc. are absolutely indispensable. Let us term it the *second pure-not-I* or the *second outer world* – the *recovered* not-I or the *recovered* outer world.

Contrary to what may seem to be the case, the latter – not the former – is what it takes to make a 'thing'. The *first pure-Not-I* (the *simple pure-not-I Anschauung* is all about from the very beginning) is *insufficient* for this purpose. It must be transformed and take the form of the *second pure-Not-I* (viz. of the *recovered pure-not-I*) before it can become a 'thing' proper.

One final remark before we close this part of our subject. According to Fichte, what we have termed the *second pure-not-I* (the *recovered pure-not-I*) and the whole new picture it stands for goes beyond *Anschauung* and adds a new rung in Fichte's epigenetic ladder. But this does not change the fact that it, too, is riddled with forgetfulness (*Vergessenheit*) and indeed very far from providing real insight into either a) the *explanandum* (the "original fact" it is supposed to explain), b) its own composition (i.e. what the explanation itself is made of) and c) the very components the explanation in question resorts to (and notably the key idea of the 'second pure-not-I'.<sup>59</sup> Fichte's

purpose is just to grasp the underlying “original explanation” which is part and parcel of what we call ‘things’. He is by no means trying to show that the said explanation is sound and consistent.

## 7. *Bild, Mittelanschauung and Ding*

Lastly, let us now add some remarks on a further rung of Fichte’s epigenetic ladder (i.e. a further major component of what it takes to make a thing) – namely *Bild* and *Ding* (image and thing proper) – or rather *Bild*, *Mittelanschauung* and *Ding* (image, “intermediary intuition” and thing. Here, too, we are dealing with an *intrinsically complex* (more precisely: a *threefold*) *sine qua non* – and the point is that the three components in question (*Bild*, *Mittelanschauung* and *Ding*) are *reciprocally dependent* or *interdependent*, so that none of them can take place without the other.

As for *Bild* (image), it should be borne in mind that this further development has to do with a new level of reflection.<sup>60</sup> The point is that in this case the I is characterized both a) by the “original fact” (the *Anstoss*-related conflict) and the “original explanation” of the said fact, and b) by real activity (*reale Thätigkeit*)<sup>61</sup> in the sense that the I also posits itself as being able to *posit something* – namely a *not-I* – as *posited by itself* (i.e. as the *product of its own freedom*).<sup>62</sup> In other words, the new level of reflection differs from everything up until now in that it takes into consideration the practical power (*das praktische Vermögen*) or the practical side of the I viz its freedom: its power to *exercise causality* and to “determine the characteristics of things entirely on its own” (*die Beschaffenheit der Dinge durch sich selbst zu bestimmen*).<sup>63</sup> We cannot discuss this topic here in detail, but it is important to remember what it means: namely that, contrary to what might seem to be the case, *das praktische Vermögen* (the practical activity of the I and the fact that it posits itself as a *free I*) plays a significant role in the epigenetic ladder laid out in Fichte’s *Grundriss* and is indeed a *sine qua non* for ‘things’ as we know them.

But one might ask: What is the connection between *Bild* (image) and *Freiheit* (freedom) viz. *das praktische Vermögen*? And what is the connection between the “*prestressed not-I*” (the ‘recovered not-I’ – the ‘second not-I’ or the ‘second outer world’ resulting from the previous rung) and *das praktische Vermögen*? Last but not least, what is the connection between *freedom* (*Freiheit*) and a ‘thing’ as such?

In this regard the first point is that *Anschauung* (N.B. *Anschauung* of the ‘prestressed not-I’) does *not* take place *uno tenore* as a *simple and immediate grasp* of the intuitive content in question. It is rather a complex process, which takes into consideration a variety of *features* or *defining properties* viz. a *complex set of criteria*. Fichte names size, shape and colour.<sup>64</sup> – but these are, of course, intended only as examples. In other words, Fichte’s point is that the *Anschauung* of a ‘thing’ (of any ‘thing’) is an *identifying or determining act* giving an answer to the question “what is this?”. And, what is more, there is no automatic and immediate answer to the said question (no immediate “this is a book”, “this is a table”, “these are spectacles”, etc.).<sup>65</sup> Here, too, everything depends on an *inconspicuous activity* – this time an underlying *ascertaining process* (or *ascertaining activity*), so quiet and inconspicuous that its result (N.B.: its *result*) appears in the guise of an *automatic and immediate self-evidence* (i. e. of an automatic and immediate *Anschauung* or *Leiden*).<sup>66</sup> Or, to be more precise, according to Fichte the specific identity of each recovered or *prestressed not-I* (of each part of what we have termed the “second

outer world”) is the outcome of a complex transition from a) objectivity in general<sup>67</sup> to b) a specific ‘thing-content’ viz. a concrete thing (‘book’, ‘table’, ‘spectacles’).

Put another way, Fichte’s first point is that there is a complex sequence of determinations leading from the more general to the more specific, in such a way that the ‘stronghold of the recovered not-I’ (viz. the ‘second outer world’) divides itself and takes the shape of a variety of contrasting determinate units (‘book’, ‘table’, ‘spectacles’, etc.) – that is, of ‘things’ as such.

But this is not all. Secondly, Fichte stresses the fact that the identification process we are talking about presupposes a further widening of the angle, for it is intrinsically related to the realm of *possibilities*. It is, as it were, a *weighing* process – and this *weighing* process is rooted in a specific activity of the I, namely the activity of *devising possibilities*. In other words, it all depends on free imagination (*freie Einbildungskraft*).<sup>68</sup> Fichte does not elaborate on this topic, but it is easy to see what he is referring to, namely a) devising the criteria in question (the identification criteria), b) devising the spectrum of possible features for each of these criteria, and c) devising the spectrum of their possible combinations (i.e. the spectrum of possible ‘thing-contents’ or ‘thing identities’).

As Fichte point out, this identification process is characterized by the fact that initially it sways or wavers between *different possibilities*: “The intuitive faculty oscillates between various specific determinations” (*Das anschauende Vermögen schwebt zwischen verschiedenen Bestimmungen*).<sup>69</sup> “As I consider each individual property of this sort, I am at first doubtful and uncertain. I base my observations upon an arbitrary schema of shape, size, and colour that approaches the shape, size, and colour of my object. I look more closely, and only then do I determine more closely my original schema: let us say, for example, I determine that the shape is that of a cube, the size that of a fist, and the colour dark green.” (*Bei jedem einzelnen Merkmale dieser Art bin ich anfangs zweifelhaft und schwankend, lege meiner Beobachtung ein willkürliches Schema von einer Figur, einer Grösse, einer Farbe, die sich denen des Objects nähern, zum Grunde, beobachte genauer, und bestimme nun erst mein Schema der Figur etwa zu einem Würfel, das der Grösse etwa zu dem einer Faust, das der Farbe etwa zu dem der dunkelgrünen.*)<sup>70</sup>

We can also express this by saying that Fichte is referring to something along the lines of Plato’s *διάλογος* of the *ψυχή* with itself – the *interior conversation* highlighted in the *Theaetetus*, in the *Sophist* and in the *Philebus*.<sup>71</sup>

And this brings us to what Fichte terms *Bild* (image) – to wit, the *outcome* of the weighing process in question. Plato highlights the fact that the interior *διάλογος* (the discussion within the *ψυχή*) eventually leads to what he terms a *δοξάζειν*: an act that *puts an end to the discussion* and *settles the matter*.<sup>72</sup> Fichte is apparently referring to something similar: “The intuiting faculty oscillates between various specific determinations and posits only one from among all those which are possible. From this determinate act of positing, the product obtains the distinctive character of an *image*. (*Das anschauende Vermögen schwebt zwischen verschiedenen Bestimmungen, und setzt unter allen möglichen nur eine, und dadurch erhält das Product den eigenthümlichen Charakter des Bildes.*)”<sup>73</sup> This is what *Bild* (image) is all about: “By means of this transition from an unspecified product of free imagination to one which is completely specified and determined in one and the same act, what appears in my consciousness becomes an image and is posited as such.” (*Durch dieses Uebergehen von einem unbestimmten Producte der freien Einbildungskraft zu der völligen Bestimmung in einem und ebendemselben Acte wird*

das, was in meinem Bewusstseyn vorkommt, ein Bild, und wird gesetzt als ein Bild).<sup>74</sup> Put another way, *Bild* (image) stands for the conclusion of the said weighing process: for the transition from the discussion within the I – the devising of possibilities and the wavering between various specific determinations (*das Schweben zwischen verschiedenen Möglichkeiten*) – to the corresponding decision or verdict: the act that settles or rules the matter, establishing that the intuitive content in question is an A or B, rather than anything else. In short, *Bild* (image) stands for the whole complex process insofar as it reaches a verdict (i.e. both for the διάλογος and the δοξάζειν, both for the wavering and for the ensuing decision or ruling).<sup>75</sup>

According to Fichte's *Grundriss*, this is the distinctive character of every image as such. To be sure, there can be no image without *Empfindung*, and there can be no image without *Anschauung*. But the point is that neither *Empfindung* nor *Anschauung* is enough to produce an image.<sup>76</sup> As such, an image requires a) some definite identification of its content: it must be determinate – it is all about determination (namely the determination of the intuitive content)<sup>77</sup>; and b) this determinate character presupposes both a framework of possibilities and their contraction (every image results from narrowing down the range of possibilities to a specific content). And this in turn means that, contrary to what might seem to be the case, an image is always a product of reflection – not only of the kind of reflection which is a *sine qua non* both for *Anschauung* and for the prestressed not-I, but of an additional kind of reflection, namely the one without which there simply is no ascertainment of what the intuitive content is all about.

But here it is important to emphasize that none of this must be conscious. Fichte's point is precisely that the reflection he is referring to (that is, both the weighing process and the verdict or ruling: both *Schweben* and *Bestimmung*) can be done in a blink of an eye – and are mostly done in a blink of an eye, so that they are hardly noticeable. In other words, Fichte is referring to an unconscious and almost instantaneous version of Plato's διάλογος of the ψυχή with itself. The verdict or decision is as tacit and unconscious as the weighing process itself. Both disappear under their product. Both forget themselves and present their result – the ensuing 'thing-content' – as something simply impinging itself upon the I (as pure and immediate *Leiden*, not as the result of an activity of the I, let alone of a twofold activity).

The bottom-line is that both *Schweben* and *Bestimmung* (that is: *Bild*) take place in each and every case, even when they remain completely unnoticed. And this means that the twofold process we are talking about is part and parcel of each and every 'thing' as such – and indeed as part and parcel of it as *Empfindung*, *Anschauung* and the twofold metamorphosis underlying the prestressed not-I (viz. the 'second outer world').

This cannot be stressed enough: both the weighing process and the ensuing verdict are a *sine qua non* for 'things' as we know them. So that, surprisingly enough, a 'thing' as such – each 'thing' – is intrinsically related both 1) to possibility (the ἐνδέχασθαι ἄλλως ἔχειν: the possibility of being otherwise – “dass es auch anders seyn könne”)<sup>78</sup> and 2) to the contraction of the corresponding framework of possibilities (i. e. to a decision of the 'contest' between rival possibilities); and this in such a manner that 3) each 'thing' results both from the free imagination of possible contents and from an ascertaining (or determining) act of the I – and hence from one's own spontaneity and free activity (i. e. from agency and freedom). In this regard, too, 'things' turn out to be made of something completely unsuspected, hiding behind its result – i.e. they turn out to be something

*completely different* (namely completely different from what things are supposed to be) *in the guise of 'things'* as we know them.

But this is not all.

As noted above, Fichte draws our attention to the fact that the weighing process underlying every image deals with a complex set of properties, so that each 'thing-content' is defined not just by one, but by a *variety* of predicates. But at this point his main concern is what happens in *each case* – i. e. with regard to *each* predicate or property.<sup>79</sup> In other words, his main concern is the basic structure that repeats itself in all cases. And this is what two further basic concepts of Fichte's *Grundriss* – namely “*complete determination*” (*volle Bestimmung*) and “*intermediary intuition*” (*Mittelanschauung*) are all about.

First, Fichte highlights that in each case both the weighing process and its outcome (its verdict or ruling) are intrinsically directed to a *vollkommene Bestimmung* – that is, to the essential assumption that in each case it must be *a certain predicate or property rather than any other*.

Secondly, Fichte's point is that this intrinsic relatedness to the *vollkommene Bestimmung* is not just an “immanent” characteristic of the two said activities of the I. The *vollkommene Bestimmung* acts as the focal point of the two activities in question because they revolve around the *not-I*. In other words, the activities in question are intrinsically directed to a *vollkommene Bestimmung* because they are intrinsically directed to the *Not-I*, and the latter appears as being perforce completely determined (*vollkommen bestimmt*). In short, the *vollkommene Bestimmung* the two activities of the I are all about is seen as *having its origin in the not-I*. We can also express this by saying that the I-related activity of complete *Bestimmung* understands itself as *tracing* or *reproducing* the “*complete Bestimmung*” of the *not-I* in question – i.e. as conforming itself to a constitutive feature of the *not-I* itself, namely that it is *vollkommen bestimmt*, not because of the activity of the I, but because it *determines itself* and cannot be itself without this complete determination.

The point is that the complete *Bestimmung* is there from the very beginning of the weighing process itself (long before any ruling or verdict), and that it is there from the very beginning (or rather, that it is *set as a task* from the very beginning) *because it impinges itself as a basic feature of the Not-I* (N. B. of the prestressed *isolated- autonomous- and-self-contained-not-I*) *as such*. And this is why Fichte speaks of an “*intermediary intuition*” (*Mittelanschauung*) – that is of an intuition which presents itself as *bridging the gap* between the activity of the isolated, autonomous and self-contained I, on the one hand, and the isolated-autonomous-and-self-contained-not-I (the *not-I* the determining activity of the I is all about), on the other. Fichte writes: “The I copies the actual thing. This thing must, therefore, be contained in the I and accessible to its activity; that is, there must be some demonstrable basis for relating the thing and the image of the thing (which are opposed to each other). A completely determined yet unconscious intuition of the thing provides the basis for the relationship in question. All the features of the object are completely determined in and for such an intuition. To that extent the intuition can be related to the thing, and the I remains passive within this intuition. Nevertheless, the intuition is also an action of the I and can therefore be related to the I insofar as it is actively engaged in forming images. As such, the I has access to the intuition; the image it forms is determined by the specific determinations it discovers in the intuition. (Or, if you prefer—though the meaning is the same—the I

freely runs through the determinations present in the image, enumerating and taking note of them.)”

(Das Ich bildet nach demselben; es muss demnach im Ich enthalten, seiner Thätigkeit zugänglich seyn: oder, es muss zwischen dem Dinge und dem Bilde vom Dinge, die einander entgegengesetzt werden, ein Beziehungsgrund sich aufweisen lassen. Ein solcher Beziehungsgrund nun ist eine völlig bestimmte, aber bewusstseynlose Anschauung des Dinges. Für sie und in ihr sind alle Merkmale des Objects vollkommen bestimmt, und insofern ist sie beziehbar auf das Ding, und das Ich ist in ihr leidend. Dennoch ist sie auch eine Handlung des Ich, und daher beziehbar auf das im Bilden handelnde Ich. Dasselbe hat Zugang zu ihr; es bestimmt nach der in ihr angetroffenen Bestimmung sein Bild (oder, wenn man lieber will, — denn beides ist gleichgeltend, — es durchläuft die in ihm vorhandenen Bestimmungen mit Freiheit, zählt sie auf, und prägt sie sich ein).<sup>80</sup>

The point is that this *Mittelanschauung* acts as the key guiding principle of the two aforementioned activities of the I. As a matter of fact, both the *wavering* of the I between rival possibilities<sup>81</sup> and the ensuing *ruling or verdict* are directed from the outset towards the not-I. They revolve around this particular kind of intuition (or relation to the prestressed isolated- autonomous-and-self-contained-not-I), namely its intuition both as something “available” (so that it does not remain utterly unknown to the I) and as something *intrinsically determined* (viz. *completely determined*, in the said sense).

This particular kind of *intuition* – the “intermediary intuition” – functions as a ‘ballast’, providing stability, as it were, to the activity of the I. It is such that

- a. it presents itself as bridging the gap between the two self-contained extremes, the self-contained I and the self-contained not-I, and providing nothing less than immediate access to the prestressed isolated-autonomous-and-self-contained-not-I,

and

- a. in the same breath it brings into force both *complete determination* and the basic *predicative thing-structure* (N.B. as something rooted in the isolated, autonomous and self-contained not-I and reflecting its intrinsic nature); or, to be more precise, what Fichte terms “intermediary intuition” brings into force both

b.1) *complete determination* of the isolated, autonomous and self-contained not-I (its intrinsic *being-so-and-not-otherwise*) and

b.2) the basic *predicative thing-structure* (the basic predicative structure of the not-I) – in such a manner that these two components merge with each other: b.1) takes the form of b.2) and *vice versa*.

All in all, a ‘thing’ (*Ding*) results from the epigenesis and complete merging of two different kinds of reflection. It is made both of the just-mentioned *formal framework* (the unity between *complete determination* and the *predicative structure* as an essential feature of the not-I) and of the *concrete predicate(s)* viz. the *complete determination* resulting from the particular kind of reflection the said *wavering* between possibilities (*das Schweben*) and the said *ruling or verdict* – i.e. *Bild* or image – are all about.

And this has two main implications.

First, *Mittelanschauung* turns out to be a *sine qua non* for image (*Bild*) as such. It provides the focal point and structural blueprint for all images. The point is that the identification of the intuitive content without which there is no image (i. e, the identification of the intuitive content every image is all about) is in turn intrinsically related to the prestressed isolated-autonomous-and-self-contained-not-I. Or, more



precisely, the identification of the intuitive content without which there is no image is intrinsically directed to the not-I as it bears the imprint of the aforementioned unity between complete determination and the predicative structure. In short, the identification of the intuitive content without which there is no image is intrinsically related to the 'thing' as such (the 'thing' every image as such is opposed to). So that every image is, by its nature, the image of a thing.

Secondly, what it all amounts to is that Fichte's "intermediary intuition", too – insofar as it is a) a *sine qua non* for image (*Bild*) and indeed b) what puts both the latter and the I in contact with the prestressed isolated-autonomous-and-self-contained-not-I – turns out to be a *sine qua non* for any 'thing' as such. And there is no exaggeration in saying that it functions as an 'Archimedean point' for all 'things'. It, too, remains unconscious and hides, as it were, behind its product.<sup>82</sup> It is an intuition: it does full justice to the name and forgets itself in its object. But none of this changes the fact that without it there would simply be no 'things' as such.

Having said that, it is important to bear in mind the following points.

First, as pointed out above, Fichte's remarks refer to five main components: the two activities giving rise to the intuitive 'thing-content' (namely a) the *devising* and *weighing* activity of free imagination b) the *ascertaining* or *ruling* activity), c) the ensuing *Bild*, d) *Mittelanschauung*, e) the corresponding *Ding*. From these, all the activities of the I (i. e. both the *weighing* and the *ruling* activity without which there would be no *Bild* and the "intermediary intuition" without which there would be no *Ding*) remain completely unnoticed. To be sure, they play a decisive role and would be no doubt detected by an observer (a cognitive witness or "observing intellect") – but *not from the standpoint of the I* in question. For the latter, the only two discernible components in sight are *Bild* and *Ding*.

Secondly, the connection between *Bild* and *Ding* is such that they have *the very same intuitive content*. And for the said "observing intellect" a) they are both the result of the "original explanation" (that is, of the "original reflection" viz. of the activity of the I) and, what is more, b) they are absolutely interdependent.<sup>83</sup> But, on the other hand, there is a *world of difference* between them. Taken at face value, the object of *Mittelanschauung* – das *Ding* – has nothing whatsoever to do with the activity of the I: it is the purely *not-I related* not-I. Whereas the image (*Bild*) *betrays its origin*. As Fichte puts it, it is the means whereby the I puts the not-I as a *product of its activity*<sup>84</sup> The activity of the I cannot be caught *in flagranti*.<sup>85</sup> It can only make its appearance *indirectly*, i. e. as a *product*: "(...) however, the I is never immediately conscious of its own acting; consequently, it can posit what is required as its product only indirectly by means of a new act of reflection." (*Aber das Ich wird, wie bekannt, seines Handelns unmittelbar sich nie bewusst; es kann demnach das geforderte nur mittelbar durch eine neue Reflexion als sein Product setzen*).<sup>86</sup> In short, image or *Bild* is the only way in which the I can become aware of its not-I related activity and "posit the opposed and limiting not-I as its product" (*das entgegengesetzte, begrenzende Nicht-Ich setzen, als sein Product*).<sup>87</sup> And the point is that it becomes aware of its own acting because the not-I in question, namely *Bild*, appears as a product of absolute freedom (*als Product der absoluten Freiheit*)<sup>88</sup>: "The distinguishing feature of such a product is that it could also be something else and could be posited as such" (*und das Kennzeichen eines solchen ist, dass es auch anders seyn könne, und als anders seynd gesetzt werden könne*)<sup>89</sup>. Or, as Fichte also puts it: "It becomes my product because I must posit it as absolutely determined by my own spontaneous activity (*Es wird mein*

*Product, weil ich es als durch absolute Selbstthätigkeit bestimmt setzen muss.*)<sup>90</sup> And that is what *Bild* is all about: it is constituted in such a way that through it “the I is regarded as positing its product as such, that is, as forming images” (*als setzend sein Produkt als solches oder als bildend*).<sup>91</sup>

The objective counterpart (i. e. the very same intuitive content as ‘thing’ or *Ding*) is of a wholly different nature: “Insofar as the I posits this image as a product of its activity, it necessarily opposes it to something which is not a product of this activity, that is, to something which is no longer determinable but is instead completely determined by itself without any contribution from the I. This is the actual thing to which the creative I conforms in designing its image, and of which it must necessarily have a vague notion as it forms this image. (*Inwiefern das Ich dieses Bild setzt, als Product seiner Thätigkeit, setzt es demselben nothwendig etwas entgegen, das kein Product derselben ist; welches nicht mehr bestimmbar, sondern vollkommen bestimmt ist, und, ohne alles Zuthun des Ich, durch sich selbst bestimmt ist. Dies ist das wirkliche Ding, nach welchem das bildende Ich in Entwerfung seines Bildes sich richtet, und das ihm daher bei seinem Bilden nothwendig vorschweben muss.*)<sup>92</sup>

Finally, this brings us to two important points.

The first has to do with Fichte’s insistence on what might be described as the *alternate dominance* of *Bild* and *Ding* – viz. the fact that their interdependence does not prevent them from being in a way *mutually exclusive*.<sup>93</sup> The point is that there is something of an *either/or* between a) understanding a given intuitive content as a *Ding* or ‘thing’ and b) understanding it as a *Bild* or ‘image’. To be sure, the two sides of this *either/or* refer to *each other* (for they are mutually interdependent). But the fact remains that they correspond to two substantially *different ways of understanding* the same intuitive content. *Mutatis mutandis*, we can perhaps compare Fichte’s *Bild* and *Ding* to the so-called “Gestalt switch” in cases of *ambiguous* or *bi-stable perception*, like Rubin’s well-known *reversible figures*: images admitting two mutually exclusive interpretations, in such a way that only one of them can be experienced at a given moment. In other words, *Bild* and *Ding* are as two sides of the same coin. You can look at it (you can look at the intuitive content) either from one side or from the other. But you cannot merge the two and look *from both sides at the same time*. In other words, *Bild* and *Ding* are visible from two irretrievably separate points of observation, and there is an *irreducible parallax gap* between them.<sup>94</sup>

This in turn paves the way for the second important aspect we cannot fail to mention, namely the connection between the polarity we are talking about (the polarity between *Bild* and *Ding*) and the very idea of truth as *adequation* – that is, the whole understanding of the connection between the *subjective* (viz. the I-related) not-I and the *objective* not-I<sup>95</sup> in terms of *adequation*.

Fichte writes: “This intuition is the basis of all the harmony which we assume to exist between things and our representations of them. As we have said, we produce an image spontaneously; it is easy to explain and to justify how we are able to view this image as our product and to posit it within ourselves. But this image is also supposed to correspond to something outside of us – to something which was neither produced nor determined by the image, to something which exists independent of the image and in accordance with its own laws. It is not easy to see what right we have to make such a claim, or even to see how we could ever come to make this claim at all – unless we have at the same time an immediate intuition of the thing. If we convince ourselves that such an immediate intuition is necessary, we will not be able to resist for very long the

conviction that the thing [which is directly intuited] must lie within ourselves, since we cannot act directly upon anything except ourselves.” (*Diese Anschauung ist der Grund aller Harmonie, den wir zwischen unseren Vorstellungen und den Dingen annehmen. Wir entwerfen unserer eigenen Aussage nach durch Spontaneität ein Bild, und es lässt sich gar wohl erklären und rechtfertigen, wie wir dasselbe als unser Product ansehen, und es in uns setzen können. Nun aber soll diesem Bilde etwas ausser uns liegendes, durch das Bild gar nicht hervorgebrachtes, noch bestimmtes, sondern unabhängig von demselben nach seinen eigenen Gesetzen existirendes entsprechen; und da lässt sich denn gar nicht einsehen, nicht nur mit welchem Rechte wir so etwas behaupten, sondern sogar nicht, wie wir auch nur auf eine solche Behauptung kommen mögen, wenn wir nicht zugleich eine unmittelbare Anschauung von dem Dinge haben. Ueberzeugen wir uns nur einmal von der Nothwendigkeit einer solchen unmittelbaren Anschauung, so werden wir auch die Ueberzeugung, dass demnach das Ding in uns selbst liegen müsse, da wir auf nichts unmittelbar handeln können, als auf uns selbst, nicht lange zurückhalten können.*)<sup>96</sup>

And then he adds: “As we have just seen, the I is completely free when it is engaged in forming images. The image has the specific character that it does because the I determines the image in one way rather than another (which, of course, it could also have done). Because it is thus freely determined, the image can be related to the I and can be posited within the I as its product. But this is not supposed to be an empty image. It is supposed to correspond to a thing outside of the I. It must, therefore, be related to this thing. We have just seen how the I gains access to the thing, thus making possible the relationship between the two, namely, by means of an immediate intuition of the thing, an intuition which must be presupposed. The image is completely determined insofar as it is related to the thing: it has to be precisely this image and not some other one, because the thing is completely determined, and the image is supposed to correspond to it. This complete determinacy provides the basis for relating the image to the thing. Not the slightest difference now remains between the image and the immediate intuition of the thing. In saying this, we are obviously contradicting what was said before; for anything that must necessarily be what it is and which cannot be something else is not a product of the I, nor can it be posited in the I or related to it.” (*Im Bilden ist das Ich völlig frei, wie wir soeben gesehen haben. Das Bild ist auf eine gewisse Art bestimmt, weil das Ich dasselbe so und nicht anders, welches es in dieser Rücksicht allerdings auch könnte, bestimmt; und durch diese Freiheit im Bestimmen wird das Bild beziehbar auf das Ich, und lässt sich setzen in dasselbe, und als sein Product. Aber dieses Bild soll nicht leer seyn; sondern es soll demselben ein Ding ausser dem Ich entsprechen: es muss demnach auf dieses Ding bezogen werden. Wie das Ding dem Ich für die Möglichkeit dieser Beziehung zugänglich werde, nemlich durch eine vorauszusetzende unmittelbare Anschauung des Dinges, ist soeben gesagt worden. Insofern nun das Bild bezogen wird auf das Ding, ist es völlig bestimmt, es muss gerade so seyn, und darf nicht anders seyn; denn das Ding ist vollkommen bestimmt, und das Bild soll demselben entsprechen. Die vollkommene Bestimmung ist der Beziehungsgrund zwischen dem Bilde und dem Dinge, und das Bild ist jetzt von der unmittelbaren Anschauung des Dinges nicht im geringsten verschieden. Dadurch wird dem vorhergehenden offenbar widersprochen; denn was nothwendig so seyn muss, wie es ist, und gar nicht anders seyn kann, ist kein Product des Ich, und lässt sich in dasselbe gar nicht setzen, oder darauf beziehen.*)<sup>97</sup>

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## NOTES

1. "Las Cosas", in: Borges 1989: 370. Cf. "Cosas", in: Borges 1989: 483f.
2. Augustinus (1981), XI, xxii.
3. See notably *KrV*, B 167, Kant (1900ff.), III: 128. For further discussion of this metaphor and its Kantian use see notably Piché (2001), Mensch (2013), and Helbig & Nassar (2016).
4. *De anima*, Aristotle (1961): 414 b 20ff.
5. *EWL*, *FSW* I, 343-344, *GA* I/3, 154-155. Translations borrowed from Breazeale (1988), with slight changes.
6. *EWL*, *FSW* I, 344, *GA* I/3, 155.
7. *EWL*, *FSW* I, 344, *GA* I/3, 155.
8. A full discussion of all three claims would go far beyond the scope of this paper. We will therefore focus on the first and the second. The third aspect must be left for another occasion.
9. *EWL*, *FSW* I, 331, *GA* I/3, 143.
10. *EWL*, *FSW* I, 331, *GA* I/3, 143.
11. *EWL*, *FSW* I, 331, *GA* I/3, 143.

12. EWL, FSW I, 335, GA I/3, 147.
13. EWL, FSW I, 331, GA I/3, 143.
14. EWL, FSW I, 331, GA I/3, 143.
15. EWL, FSW I, 333, GA I/3, 145.
16. EWL, FSW I, 332, GA I/3, 143.
17. I. e. the process by means of which the I posits the original *Anstoss-related* fact (and the ensuing conflict: namely the “conflict between the opposing directions of the I’s activity”) within itself:
18. EWL, FSW I, 338, GA I/3, 149.
19. EWL, FSW I, 335, GA I/3, 147.
20. EWL, FSW I, 339, GA I/3, 150.
21. EWL, FSW I, 339, GA I/3, 150.
22. See notably EWL, FSW I 335f., 338f., and 344, GA I/3, 147f., 149f., 155.
23. EWL, FSW I, 339, GA I/3, 150.
24. EWL, FSW I 339, GA I/3, 150-151.
25. EWL, FSW I, 340, GA I/3, 151.
26. EWL, FSW I, 340, GA I/3, 151.
27. EWL, FSW I, 352, GA I/3, 161.
28. As Fichte sometimes puts it, an observing intellect would see them as part and parcel of *Empfindung*. But the point is that *Empfindung* itself does not and cannot. For *Empfindung* itself they remain, as it were, *in a blind spot*.
29. EWL, FSW I, 340, GA I/3, 152.
30. See p. 3 above.
31. EWL, FSW I, 341, GA I/3, 152.
32. EWL, FSW I, 341, GA I/3, 153.
33. EWL, FSW I, 341, GA I/3, 153.
34. EWL, FSW I, 342, GA I/3, 153.
35. EWL, FSW I, 342, GA I/3, 153.
36. EWL, FSW I, 342, GA I/3, 153.
37. EWL, FSW I, 342, GA I/3, 153.
38. EWL, FSW I, 342, GA I/3, 153.
39. EWL, FSW I, 342, GA I/3, 154.
40. EWL, FSW I, 342, GA I/3, 154.
41. EWL, FSW I, 342-343, GA I/3, 154.
42. EWL, FSW I, 349, GA I/3, 159.
43. EWL, FSW I, 343, GA I/3, 154.
44. EWL, FSW I, 346, GA I/3, 156.
45. EWL, FSW I, 346, GA I/3, 156.
46. Cf. EWL, FSW I, 366ff., GA I/3, 172ff.
47. EWL, FSW I, 368, GA I/3, 174.
48. EWL, FSW I, 368, GA I/3, 174.
49. EWL, FSW I, 366f., GA I/3, 172f.
50. EWL, FSW I, 351, GA I/3, 161.
51. EWL, FSW I, 347, GA I/3, 157.
52. EWL, FSW I, 357, GA I/3, 168.
53. EWL, FSW I, 357, GA I/3, 165.
54. EWL, FSW I, 355, GA I/3, 163.
55. EWL, FSW I, 352, GA I/3, 161.
56. EWL, FSW I, 353, GA I/3, 162.
57. EWL, FSW I, 359, GA I/3, 166.

58. EWL, FSW I, 360, GA I/3, 168.

59. See notably EWL, FSW I, 360ff., and 368, GA I/3, 167ff. and 174.

60. Cf. EWL, FSW I, 374, GA I/3, 178.

61. EWL, FSW I, 368, GA I/3, 174.

62. EWL, FSW I, 371, 372ff., GA I/3, 177f. .

63. EWL, FSW I, 368, GA I/3, 174.

64. Cf. EWL, FSW I, 374, GA I/3, 179: "I now reflect upon its individual properties – upon its shape, for instance, its size, its colour, etc. – and I posit them in my consciousness." (*Ich reflectire jetzt auf die einzelnen Merkmale desselben, z.B. auf seine Figur, Grösse, Farbe u.s.f., und setze sie in meinem Bewusstseyn.*)

65. And this means: no *immediate* 'book', no *immediate* 'table', no *immediate* 'spectacles', etc.

66. And therefore, as the *exact opposite* of a *result* (and a *fortiori* as the *exact opposite* of the *result* of a *subjective activity*).

67. The overarching "second not-I" Fichte describes in the following terms (EWL, FSW I, 374, GA I/3, 179): "However, everything in the object is still confused and intermingled; it is nothing more than an object. (*Aber noch ist in dem Objecte alles verworren und unter einander gemischt, und es ist weiter auch nichts, denn ein Objekt.*)

68. EWL, FSW I, 374, GA I/3, 179. There is of course, a world of difference between the activity of *free imagination* (*freie Einbildungskraft*) we are now talking about – the activity whereby the I opens the field of various possibilities – and the above-mentioned "power to posit or not to posit" (*das Vermögen zu setzen oder nicht zu setzen*). For the latter has nothing to do with *devising* (or for that matter *weighing*) possibilities. It concerns just the *either/or* between *positing* or *not positing* an intuition.

69. EWL, FSW I, 374, GA I/3, 179.

70. EWL, FSW I, 374, GA I/3, 179.

71. See notably *Sophist*, 261c6-264b8, Plato (1867): 171-179, *Theaetetus*, 189e6-190a7, Plato (1861): 153f., and *Philebus*, 37b10-39c69, Plato (1897): 77-83.

72. As opposed to *διστάζειν* (*Theaetetus* 190a3). Plato also uses other terms, notably *κρίνειν* (*Philebus*, 38c6) and *ὀρίζειν* (*Theaetetus*, 190a2), which can help us realize that there is some common ground between the two approaches. See also *Sophist* 264b1 where the Stranger from Elea speaks of *δοξάζειν* as a *conclusion* or *completion* of thinking (*διανοίας ἀποτελεύτησις*).

73. EWL, FSW I, 374, GA I/3, 179.

74. EWL, FSW I, 374-375, GA I/3, 179.

75. Incidentally it should be noted that the affinity we are talking about is not due only to the fact that Plato and Fichte share a similar view on the said *twofold* structure, namely: a) *διάλογος* (*διστάζειν*) viz. *Schweben*, and b) *δοξάζειν* viz. *Bestimmung*. There is a further point of contact between them, namely the fact that Plato draws our attention to the pivotal role played by what he describes as the inner *clerk*, *scribe* or *secretary* (*γραμματεὺς* or *γραμματιστής*), who is constantly writing in an *inner book* – so that this clerk or secretary is closely associated both with the inner *διάλογος* (viz. *διστάζειν*) and with *δοξάζειν*. And this means that in Plato's view, too, 1) what appears to us depends on an *identification* process, 2) the key role in this identification process is taken away from *αἴσθησις* and *μνήμη* (viz. from the simple *registration* of *αἴσθησις* through *μνήμη*) and given to something else: namely, to something intrinsically *heterogeneous* and *epigenetic* to *αἴσθησις* and *μνήμη*. For the inner clerk *collates* and *compares* the perceptual data, he *reflects* and *ascertains what they stand for*, he *construes them as lasting realities*, etc. And, what is more, his activity is as intrinsically *heterogeneous* and *epigenetic* to *αἴσθησις* and *μνήμη* as *writing* viz. *letters* are to *sounds* or *language* proper – so that this radical

*transformation*, not just the idea of registration, is what Plato's inner 'clerk' or 'secretary' is all about; as a matter of fact, the inner γραμματεὺς is so fundamentally different from αἰσθησις and μνήμη that, as Plato puts it, there must be a further inner 'servant' or 'handicraftsman', namely an inner *painter* (ζωγράφος), to "retranslate" (or "retrovert") the clerk's registrations or "entries" into the original "language" of αἰσθησις and μνήμη (i. e. into something *visual* or *perceptual*). The point being that the 'inner secretary' is not a 'painter', but something *else*, upon which everything (not least the 'painter') depends. See notably Carvalho 2012: in particular 295-312.

76. So that the commonly held notion that equates images with *Empfindungen* or *Anschauungen* stems from an *insufficient* assessment of what it takes to make an image as such.

77. We can also express this by saying that what Fichte terms image is characterized by the fact that it *makes out* its intuitive content.

78. EWL, FSW I, 374, GA I/3, 179.

79. See notably EWL, FSW I, 383, GA I/3, 186: "We are not concerned here with the synthetic union of several characteristic features in a single substrate. Nor, as will become immediately evident, are we concerned with the synthetic union of the features with the substrate. We are concerned instead with the complete determinacy of the representing I when it comprehends a feature. As an example of such a feature one might imagine the shape of a body in space." (*Es ist hier nicht die Rede von der synthetischen Vereinigung mehrerer Merkmale in Einem Substrat, und ebensowenig von der synthetischen Vereinigung des Merkmals mit dem Substrate, wie sich sogleich ergeben wird; sondern von der vollkommenen Bestimmtheit des vorstellenden Ich in Auffassung eines Merkmals, wovon als Beispiel man sich indessen die Figur eines Körpers im Raume denken kann.*)

80. EWL, FSW I, 375, GA I/3, 179-180. See also EWL, FSW I, 376, GA I/3, 181, where Fichte speaks of the intuition in question as a "middle term" (*Mittelglied*) and EWL, FSW I, 383, GA I/3, 185-186.

81. Inasmuch as reaching a *ruling* or *decision* is its intrinsic aim.

82. Cf. EWL, FSW I, 376-377, GA I/3, 180-181.

83. See notably EWL, FSW I, 379, GA I/3, 182-183: "The gist of the law we are seeking is as follows: An image must not be possible without a thing, and a thing must not be possible (at least in the respect we are speaking of here, i.e., for the I) without an image. Thus, both the image and the thing would be synthetically united, and neither could be posited without positing the other. / The I is supposed to relate the image to the thing. We have to show that this relationship is impossible unless the image as such (i.e., as a free product of the I) is presupposed. If the required relationship is all that makes the thing possible, then by corroborating the last assertion, we will have succeeded in proving that the thing is not possible without the image. To reverse the argument: The I is supposed to produce the image freely. We have to show that this is impossible unless the thing is presupposed. We will then have demonstrated that no image is possible without a thing (a thing for the I, as goes without saying)." (*Die Idee des aufzusuchenden Gesetzes wäre folgendes: Es müsste ein Bild gar nicht möglich seyn, ohne ein Ding; und ein Ding müsste wenigstens in der Rücksicht, in welcher hier davon die Rede seyn kann, d.i. für das Ich, nicht möglich seyn, ohne ein Bild. So würden beide, das Bild und das Ding, in synthetischer Verbindung stehen, und eins würde nicht gesetzt werden können, ohne dass auch das andere gesetzt würde. / Das Ich soll das Bild beziehen auf das Ding. Es ist zu zeigen, dass diese Beziehung nicht möglich sey, ohne Voraussetzung des Bildes, als eines solchen, d.i. als*

eines freien Productes des Ich. Wird durch die geforderte Beziehung das Ding überhaupt erst möglich, so wird durch Erhärtung der letzteren Behauptung bewiesen, dass das Ding nicht möglich sey, ohne das Bild. - Umgekehrt, das Ich soll mit Freiheit das Bild entwerfen. Es müsste gezeigt werden, dass dies nicht möglich sey, ohne Voraussetzung des Dinges; und es wäre dadurch dargethan, dass kein Bild möglich sey, ohne ein Ding (es versteht sich, ein Ding für das Ich.)

84. EWL, FSW I, 374, GA I/3, 178-179.

85. EWL, FSW I, 374, GA I/3, 178-179.

86. EWL, FSW I, 374, GA I/3, 178-179.

87. EWL, FSW I, 374, GA I/3, 178.

88. EWL, FSW I, 374, GA I/3, 179.

89. EWL, FSW I, 374, GA I/3, 179.

90. EWL, FSW I, 375, GA I/3, 179.

91. EWL, FSW I, 377, GA I/3, 181.

92. EWL, FSW I, 375, GA I/3, 179. Cf. EWL, FSW I, 383, GA I/3, 185-186.

93. See notably EWL, FSW I, 378, GA I/3, 181f.

94. We use parallax in the sense it has in Kant, "*Träume eines Geistersehers*", in Kant (1900ff.), II: 349 The word stands for the displacement (or difference in the apparent position) of an object viewed from two different points of observation – for example, the shift in position that occurs when one alternately shuts the right and the left eye and there is a difference between the right-eye-image, the left-eye-image and the binocular image.

95. I.e. the prestressed isolated-autonomous-and-self-contained -not-I viz. the purely non-I-related not-I.

96. EWL, FSW I, 377, GA I/3, 181.

97. EWL, FSW I, 377-378, GA I/3, 181-182.

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## ABSTRACTS

This paper focuses on Fichte's transcendental account of what it takes to make a thing, as laid out in his

*Grundriss des Eigenthümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre*

. It tries to work out which 'ingredients' are necessary to make a 'thing' (viz. an 'object') and what their connection is with each other. The point is that a) Fichte's account of the said 'ingredients' in his

*Grundriss*(notably *Anstoss*,

*Empfindung, Anschauung, Vermögen zu setzen oder nicht zu setzen, reines Nicht-Ich, Bild, Mittelschauung*

, and *Ding*



proper) differs from all others, b) his understanding of each and every one of these 'ingredients' is surprisingly ground-breaking (and proposes nothing less than a completely new approach to the 'ingredients' in question, c) pretty much the same holds true for Fichte's view on their connection with each other – so that d) the *Grundriss* gives a very singular answer to the question 'what is a thing?'.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** Doctrine of Science, Outline (1795), original fact, original explanation, thing, check, sensation, intuition, image, intermediary intuition

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